

"The Labour Leader is, by all odds, the most successful Labour Paper that has yet come under my notice."

THOMAS G. BROWNE.

Glasgow, U.S.

# The Labour Leader

A WEEKLY RECORD OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROGRESS.

"The Labour Leader is the most successful effort in Labour journalism yet made."

J. HENRY ROBINSON.

BIRMINGHAM.

Come forth from the valley, come forth from the hill,  
Come forth from the workshop, the mine, and the mill.  
From pleasure or slumber, from study or play,  
Come forth in your mayride to aid us to-day.  
There's a word to be spoken, a deed to be done,  
A truth to be uttered, a cause to be won.

Edited by  
**KEIR HARDIE.**

Come, youths, in your vigour; come, men, in your prime;  
Come, age, with experience fresh gathered from time;  
Come workers, you're welcome; come, thinkers, you're wanted;  
Come, that's right, and make the world a better place.  
Or the waves of the sea glistening bright in the sun  
There's a truth to be told, and a cause to be won.

—Charles Mackay.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

18th JULY.

A Word with the Northern Pitmen.

By THE EDITOR.

The first article of a series, specially written for the *Labour Leader*, commences this week, entitled

## LIFE AND DEATH IN THE COALFIELDS.

THE FIRST ARTICLE DEALS WITH MICKLEFIELD; A DESOLATED VILLAGE; £15,000 SUBSCRIBED; WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE MONEY, WIDOWS, AND ORPHANS?

The Durham Miners' Gala Day is on July 18th, when the *Labour Leader* will be on sale. Will readers willing to aid send their names at once to the Glasgow Office.

## STRICTLY LONDON.

By MARXIAN.

On Sir Hercules Robinson, the £153 a week Governor of Cape Colony, departing for England, that very knowing journal, the *Natal Witness*, devoutly came out with the headline, "Thank God he's going." But Mr. Chamberlain—his punishing face is getting more deeply lined and his hair shows grey at last—has never visited South Africa, and he sees in Sir Hercules a kindred victim, or intended victim, of the great Rhodesian stroke of state. Thus, with melancholy faithfulness, the Colonial Secretary who knew nothing of the raid, sticks by the Cape Governor who knew nothing of the raid. That is the meaning of Joe's answer to Willie Redmond that Sir Hercules "expects to return to South Africa"—an answer received in chilling silence by his own side. I wonder whether AyIward, the ex-Fenian and ex-editor of the *Natal Witness*, still acts as military secretary to the Transvaal Government?

—o—

My own impression happens to be that Joseph, strong as he is, cannot possibly save the ignorant and incompetent Robinsonian demigod. But while a shaven apparition—said to be the son of a bishop, out of a parson's daughter—dwelt pathetically on the starvation wages paid to Christians in the Gloucester—no, on the Turkish oppression of Christians in Crete, nearly two thousand miles from Gloucester, I buttonholed Mr. George Whiteley, senior member for Stockport, and adjourned to the depths of the smoke-room.

You will recollect Mr. Whiteley had, the previous Wednesday evening, forcibly told the Government that their Agricultural Rating Bill is not a democratic measure, and that it will conserve nothing—not even their own seats in the House of Commons. A significant sign of the blindness of victory is that a triumphant political party, drawing its nascent strength from the urban districts, should tolerate a Cabinet composed almost entirely of landowners. Chamberlain, Ritchie, and Goschen represent the only business element in the Cabinet. The other sixteen men belong, more or less exclusively, to the lawlord and landlord class; and Goschen tries hard to forget he has ever done anything less dignified than accept rents from his profit-purchased estate at Hawksworth.

other large towns the Agricultural Rating Bill may help us a little. At Stockport no.

Climbing upstairs, I listened to Willie Redmond, then wearing a dark crimson flower in his coat, slating Mr. George Curzon on the Soudan expedition. Money was being voted, so, of course, but few members were present. Colonel Lockwood, a gorgeous figure, shone almost alone on the rear Ministerial benches. And the snappish Curzon traveller was quite alone on the front bench until "Prime Minister" Brodrick joined him and dexterously showed Mr. Redmond the sole of the Brodrickian right boot. Later on Balfour drops in. Joe had left, but now he returns—and chats with young Curzon. All eyes centre upon Joe—the man whose contempt for his colleagues has attained Satanic proportions. Seldom is Joe seen in the House at so late an hour. No; he doesn't speak. Balfour speaks. There has been a running fire from E. J. C. Morton—a comical-looking little monkey who studies the *Labour Leader*—and from Mr. Dalziel, following up the younger Redmond's attack. As Sir William Harcourt is not present, Dalziel naturally takes the reins. Government refuses anything more instructive than a statement that when the troops get to Dongola they will not retreat—if they can help it.

And so on, and so on, the money at last being voted—a paltry item of £50,000 or £60,000, including Lord Salisbury's £5000 salary. Outside, cabs rattle through Whitehall and Parliament Street, conveying M.P.s and revellers homeward. Low on the horizon swings the moon, the uncanny shadow of the planet of pain distinctly visible on part of her surface. Upward, outward, and downward, in every direction, plunge and rise the undulating abysses of Space. I am but a creature of lust and ambition, like the rest. Yet, in the summer night, I feel the meanness, the foolishness, the inhumanity of the struggle of fear, frippery, and falsehood pursued around me amid an environment so majestic and so awful. However, Lord Salisbury has got his salary.

Either you are working for Socialism or you are wasting your life. The cruel development of modern industry leaves you no escape from this dilemma. You must work for Socialism or you must waste your life. And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by. I have ceased to grieve over them. I regard them as a victorious soldier regards the corpse of those flying rebels who might have been his comrades in triumph. Shut your Christian ears to the deep, inarticulate cry of the beleaguered people, and, when you shut your hands in the death you dread, you shall take hold of the terror of naked Space. Nothing shall you clasp in those dead hands save the daring service you have rendered to the children of men. Happy be he whose hands are full: who has not been afraid, nor hidden his talent in the earth.

Faster pull the cabs and the last tottered omnibus. The weird, shadowed "maiden with white fire laden" glints on the massive, mullioned strength of the Abbey. That wondrous treasury was not the product of a profit-mongering age. And the lives of stout

Stephen Langton and Hubert, who "saved Dover from France," were not Jerry-built lives. This present age is the age of the Jerry-builder. And its typical Westminster products are the sainted Monk of Gloucester, the Monks of Montrose, and the heroic Joiceys and Tomlinsons.

What about Tomlinson of Berkley Square?

Although I said the Ridley-Collings Coal Mines Bill will pass, it is more than likely first to be totally eviscerated in the interests of the coalowners. The real and important Coal Mines Bill is the one drafted to meet the views of the trade unions, and is in Sir Charles Dilke's charge. This latter Bill was ordered by the House of Commons to be printed last February. It can be obtained through any bookseller for 2/-d. Get it for yourself. There is not the slightest chance of the Government offering any facilities for its passage into law. I sometimes think the *Daily Chronicle* confuses the two Bills. Dilke's Bill means business. Ridley's is a quintessential bit of bluff.

Curious rumours reach me respecting the Government Bill dealing with the Army Reserves. It will be dropped in a hurry, as no Minister has the courage to face the desperate hash into which our army system has drifted. Practically there are no army reserves and very little militia. In the event of war, the Volunteer force would be under orders for active service, or we should resort at once to conscription. An expedition to the Transvaal or the Soudan would use up all our available soldiers. Who gets the bulk of the £20,000,000 expended annually on England's land forces?



AND AFTER.

Yet he is asked to celebrate its Jubilee.

Perhaps Mr. Charles Williams will investigate the matter. It would be fully as interesting to the taxpayer as his descriptions of the Russian coronation. His unpublished descriptions, I mean.

—o—

Bewildered by the mass of fiction created to conceal the connection between Krugersdorp and Dongola, the lying of Ministers grows daily more and more inartistic. Close upon Mr. Curzon's lip-tinging assurance—"This is not a British expedition, but an Egyptian expedition"—rose Lord George Hamilton's demand that the cost of troops to help the said Egyptian expedition be borne by the starving helots of our rule in India. I wish Hyndman had been in the House to criticize the proposal and the knaves

who put it forward. And I wish Mr. Vaughan Nash, of the *Daily Chronicle*, had studied coal mines as thoroughly as Hyndman has studied the Indian question. On a technical point in the Trade Union Bill, Mr. Nash upholds one view and the miners adopt another. Therefore, says Mr. Nash, the Bill is "defective." Perhaps it is. Perhaps not.

Debating, last Tuesday night, the tax of fourpence contributed by each purchaser of a pound of tea, Mr. Logan, the stalwart member for a Leicestershire division, actually uttered sound economics in the House of Commons. "What is the object of this tax?" queried Logan, with a brusque vigour that nearly woke Mr. Hartbury. "It is," went on the man from Leicestershire, "to save the pockets of those persons who pay direct taxation. Yes; where do I get the money to pay my income-tax? I get it from the wages of my workmen. What right have I to shift a tea-tax on to them as well?" And the Logan man—he is a man, too—mustered a tiny band to vote against the fourpence.

Marxian must interview that Logan man.

Please note that a reference in an earlier paragraph to Mr. E. J. C. Morton is entirely affectionate. The grand style in which he bows to the Speaker constitutes so liberal and radical an education that I would not offend Mr. Morton for worlds of bread and butter. And Sir Hercules Robinson has a consolation coronet. That's all.

*The Cabinet and Party Politics.* By W. E. Snell (London: Ellis, Sons & Foster). This is a series of papers dealing with a big topic. Under such headings as "The Problem," "The Public Service," "Political Ethics," "Representation," and "The Remedy," Mr. Snell manages to deal with the absurd anomalies which to-day take the place of administrative government. He claims urgency for the question, and sums up his conclusions in the following proposal: "Let government servants be excluded from Parliament, and let each government department be closely supervised by a Parliamentary committee. Those wanting to know the best that can be said for this reform should consult the book itself."

*Democratic Readings from the World's Great Teachers.* Compiled and edited by W. M. Thompson, L.L.C. (London: John Dick, 1s.). The idea underlying this compilation is good, the execution far from perfect. In the selections from the great religious teachers it is notable, and regrettable, that wherever a sentence capable of a lascivious or dirty meaning could be found it has been dragged into a prominent place. It is an insult to the common people to couple them with a love of the profane, and this feature spoils what would otherwise have been a work of much value.

*The Report of the Fourth Annual Conference of the I.L.P.; Preparing for the Tenth-Century.* By Bruce Wallace, M.A., and the Commonwealth, have been received. The latter contains an excellent likeness of John Ruskin. It presents the old man's face in quite a new light. Canon Scott Holland writes the accompanying note in a very sympathetic vein. The article on the "Revolt against Machinery," by John A. Hobson, will be eagerly welcomed by all engaged in combating old-world ideas on machinery.

See our enlarged editions of 1st and 2nd August for descriptive account of the International Congress, by special correspondents, and illustrated by our own artist. Make sure of getting these numbers and order early.







and will always remain the instrument of the domination of a class or party? Or because we believe that the new society ought to be organised by the direct agreement of all concerned, from the circumference to the centre, freely, spontaneously, under the inspiration of the sentiment of solidarity and under the pressure of natural and social necessities, and because that if this organisation was made by means of decrees from a central body, either elected or a directorship, it will begin by being an artificial organisation, forcing and disuniting everybody, and it would end in the creation of a new class of professional politicians, who would seize for themselves all sorts of privileges and monopolies? It might easily be maintained with more justice that we are, if not the only Socialists, certainly the most thorough and logical, because we claim for every man, not only his entire portion of social wealth, but also his part in social power—that is to say, the real faculty of making his influence felt equally with that of others in the management of public affairs.

If we are Socialists, then it is clear that a congress from which we are excluded cannot honestly call itself "The Socialist Workers' Congress," and that it ought to take the particular title of the party or parties admitted to its deliberations. For example, none of us would think of mixing with a congress which would be called a "Social Democratic Congress" or a "Congress of Parliamentary Socialists."

But let us leave alone this question of nomenclature, and neglect also the discussion of the question, if the London Committee has properly interpreted the resolutions of Zurich. Let us go to the root of the matter. It is to the interest of all the enemies of our capitalist society that the workers should be united and solid in the struggle against capitalism, and that they should be conscious that this struggle is of necessity of an economic character. It is not because we ignore the importance of political questions. We believe not only that government—the state—is an evil in itself, but that it is the armed defence of capitalism, and that the people cannot take possession of their own property without passing over the bodies of its armed police—really or figuratively, according to circumstances. Thus we ought necessarily to occupy ourselves in the political struggle against government. But it may be owing to the difference of conditions and of temperaments of the peoples of various countries, or the fact that the relations between the political constitution and the conditions of the masses are very complicated, hard to adapt and less capable of being treated in a way that seems good to everybody, that politics are in effect a great source of division, and the fact is that the conscious workers in the different countries whom it would be easy to solidly unite in the economic struggle, are by politics broken up into many fractions. Consequently an understanding between all the workers who fight for their emancipation is not possible, save on economic ground—and it is this that is of most consequence, because political action of the proletariat, parliamentary or revolutionary, is equally futile so long as it does not form a conscious organised economic force. Every attempt to enforce a single political opinion upon the labour movement tends to its disintegration and stops the progress of its economic organisation.

The Social Democrats evidently desire to force upon the workers their special programme. It might almost be said that they want to prevent those who do not accept the decisions of their party from fighting for human emancipation! They have had in this direction more or less success—perhaps they will have more—but that can only take place at the expense of a general understanding among the workers, and certainly without desiring it, serving the interests of the middle classes. If Socialists would only remember the history of the old International, which certainly the old among them know better than it is generally related. There were plenty of insults between Marxists and Bakunists. The truth is that both sections wished to make its special

programme triumphant in the International, and in the struggle between Centralism and Federalism, between Statism and Anarchism, we neglected the class struggle and economic solidarity, and the International perished through it. To-day the Anarchists, though we owe to them in many countries the first Socialist trade unions, by a series of circumstances and errors which there is no need at present to examine, have not much influence—save in Spain—in the Labour movement. But this will not last long, and the Social Democrats would do wrong to reckon upon it.

Certainly the Anarchists will soon be brought by the logic of their programme and by the necessities of the struggle to put their strength and their hope in the international organisation of the masses of the workers.

those that believe as they believe, but that all shall be united in the economic struggle.

Then, if the Social Democrats persist in their attempt at military despotism, and thus sow dissension among the workers, may the latter be able to understand and bring to a glorious triumph the noble words of Marx: "Workers of the world, unite!"

Familiar words in a strange tongue always have a curious effect. The following is a translation of Burns's well-known lines, referred to approvingly by the *Petite République* recently:

The rank is but the guinea stamp,  
The man's the gold for a' that.  
Le rang n'est que l'emprunte  
De la guinée; c'est l'homme  
Qui est l'or, malgré tout ça.  
Malgré tout ça!

Adjournment of the discussion was more than once moved, but was rejected. The whole of the clauses were carried, and the House finally adjourned at twenty minutes past eight on Tuesday morning, having sat all Monday night.

#### TUESDAY.

West Highland Railway Guarantee Bill. Second reading. Mr. Strachey moved an amendment preventing special financial assistance being given to Scotch railways. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said the guarantee which the Government proposed of 3 per cent. on the cost of the railway, £200,000, and of £20,000 for a new pier, was for the purpose of developing the fishing industry of the Scotch Highlands. Amendment defeated by 826 to 67, and Bill read a second time. Conciliation (Trades Disputes) Bill. Second reading moved by Mr. Ritchie, who said that by the Bill

Trade. Mr. Chaplin moved the second reading of the Locomotives on Highways Bill, which proposes to amend the law with respect to the use of locomotives on roads, with the object of providing the public with some such cheap and easy mode of transport as is so largely used abroad. A locomotive, as described by the Bill, is not to emit any visible smoke or vapour. After some favourable discussion the Bill was read a second time and referred to Standing Committee on Law.

#### WEDNESDAY.

Mr. Chaplin moved the third reading of the Agricultural Land Rating Bill. Mr. Asquith, in moving that the Bill be read that day [three months], said that in his opinion the Bill was intended to compensate the landed interest for the Finance Act of 1894. It was not necessary from the fact that the average rates in county boroughs were 4s. 6d. in the £, and in rural districts only 2s. 3d. He entirely approved of the strenuous opposition which had been offered to the Bill. Mr. Whitley (Conservative, Stockport) said the Bill was repugnant to dealers in towns and urban districts. If any Lancashire member denied this let them both resign their seats and take the vote of the electors. The question was not before the country at the last election. He believed the only sound and economical way of assisting the producer in agriculture was by a large reduction of rents. The third reading was carried by 326 to 140.

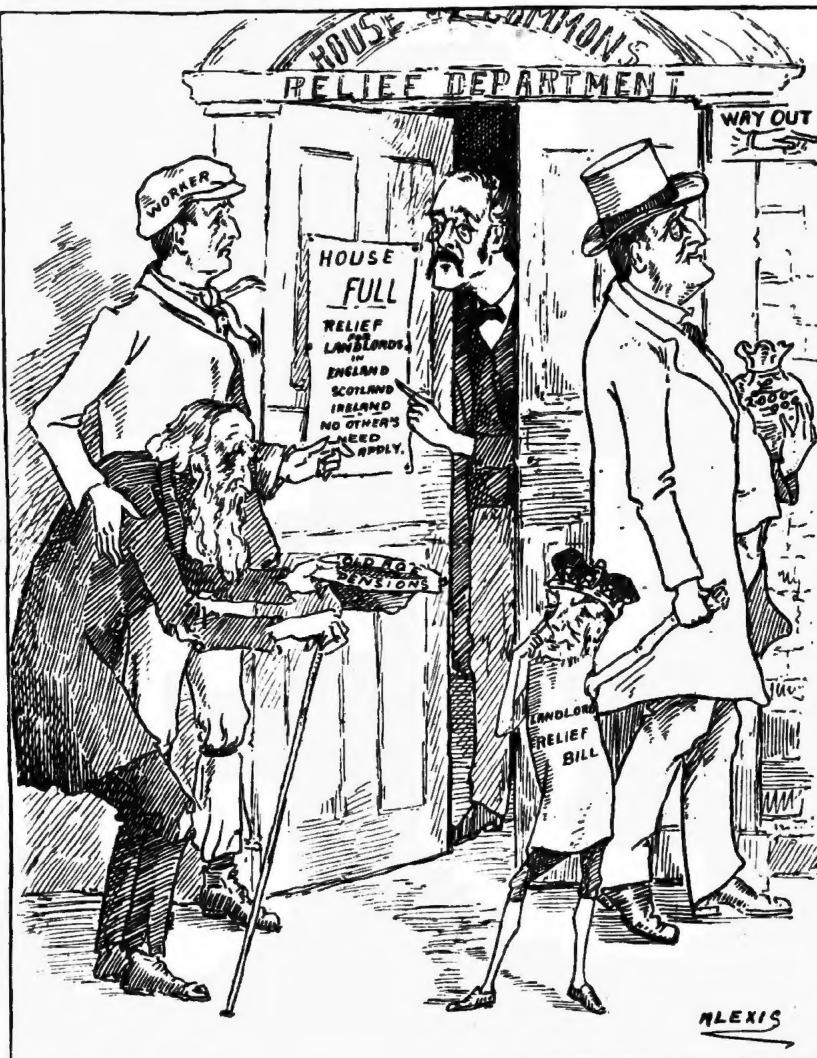
#### THURSDAY.

The Home Secretary in reply to Mr. John Ellis, said the number of lives lost in coal mines from explosions was in 1890, 312; 1891, 76; 1892, 146; 1893, 175; 1894, 329; 1895, 79; first six months of this year, 126. Scotch Rating Bill, introduced by the Lord Advocate, provides for the same relief to Agricultural Rates in Scotland as was given by the Land Rating Bill in England. The plan of applying relief would, however, have to be different, as in Scotland rates were equally divided between owner and occupier. The method, therefore, would be to reduce the agricultural occupiers' rates by three-eights and reduce his valuation to three-eighths. They proposed also to take a sum of £15,000 a year to form the nucleus of a consolidated districts board. For these purposes a yearly sum of £214,500 would be required. In Committee a resolution was carried by 256 to 75 authorising the expenditure of £3,000,000 out of the Consolidated Fund for the construction of a railway in Africa from Mombasa to Uganda. Coal Mines Bill. Second reading. The Home Secretary explained the provisions of the Bill. First, to give the Home Secretary special powers of amending the rules under the general Act which regulates each matter as description of lights or lamps used in a mine, description of explosives, mode of dealing with and storing them, washing and efficient damping of the mine, etc.; second, furnishing plans of abandoned mines; third, dealing with the check-weighting and truck system (this part of the Bill would be withdrawn as it was opposed); fourth, to give power to prohibit a certain class of explosives. Provision was made for arbitration if any objection were taken to the special rules laid down by the Home Secretary. Mr. Asquith warmly supported the Bill, and suggested that in place of the costly and dilatory procedure by arbitration it would be sufficient if the special rules were allowed to come into force after having lain for a certain period on the table of the House. Sir Charles Dilke said there was a good deal of exaggeration in the approval of the Bill, as it was a very slight one, and carried them only a little way. The Miners' Conference Bill contained thirty-three clauses and the present Bill only nine, two of which were to be dropped. Mr. John Burns urged the Home Secretary to eliminate the amendments of both masters and men in Committee, so that the Bill might be got through without delay. Bill then read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Trade.

#### FRIDAY.

Committee of Supply. Vote of £51,000 for the Foreign Office was agreed to after discussion as to affairs in Armenia, Crete, the South African Expedition, and Venezuela.

*See our enlarged editions of 1st and 8th August for descriptive account of the International Congress, by special correspondents, and illustrated by our own artists. Make sure of getting these numbers and order early.*



One begs—and gets left; the other takes—and leaves.

Already eloquent signs of this can be seen. What will happen then? Will there be again two Internationals, waging in internal quarrels the strength which ought to be employed against the capitalist middle classes, and will they again end in killing each other?

We have no intention of demanding far from that—that the different parties and schools should renounce their programme and their tactics. We hold to our own ideas, and we understand that the others will do the same. We only ask that division shall not be carried where it ought not to be; we demand the right for every worker to fight against capitalism hand in hand with his brothers, without distinction of political ideas; we ask that all shall fight as they think best, with

#### PARLIAMENTARY PEMMICKAN.

Monday, 23rd June, to Friday, 3rd July.

#### MONDAY.

Upon the motion of Mr. Balfour the suspension of the twelve o'clock rule was passed. Land Rating Bill. Report stage. Amendments of a technical character to the various clauses of the Bill were in every instance rejected by large majorities. They dealt principally with such questions as the division of ratable value between houses and buildings and land; the local authority to whom payments from the Exchequer were to be made; the provision for appeals against assessment under the Bill, etc. The closure was frequently applied upon the motion of Mr. Balfour, although it was occasionally rejected by the Speaker,

recognised the existing boards of conciliation in the country, and would assist rather than interfere with them. It provided that where boards of conciliation did not at present exist the Board of Trade might take steps to create them; also in cases where differences existed, or upon the application of either of the parties to a dispute, the Board of Trade should intervene upon their own initiative and appoint a conciliator or board of conciliation. Sir Charles Dilke thought that where they had powerful trade unions there was no necessity for such a Bill. Mr. Pickard said the Bill would interfere with the wages of workmen. Employers and workmen alike believed they could settle their business more satisfactorily without the intervention of a third party. After further discussion, the Bill was read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Trade.

#### FRIDAY.

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**Matron and Maidens.**

An Edinburgh correspondent sends me a newspaper cutting dealing with the question of women and farm labour. It appears from a statement made recently at a meeting of the acting committee of the Inverness Farmers' Society, that although, not so long ago, women took part in nearly all the work of the farm, there is now a difficulty in getting them to undertake farm labour of any kind. In some parts of the country farmers are getting their cows milked by men and boys.

The writer of the article recognises that there has, during the past fifteen or twenty years, been a gradual evolution in the condition of women in connection with manual labour of all kinds, and that although the introduction of machinery for certain parts of farm work will no doubt to a certain extent account for the changes referred to, there are, he believes, other and more deep-seated causes than that.

"Women," he says, "whether it be for their good or for their evil, are steadily leaving country work not only in the field but in the kitchen. People of moderate means in towns, even where girls are numerous, find it difficult to get a general servant. On the other hand shops in villages, towns, and cities, are crammed with young girls serving for three, five, and six shillings a week, and in many cases living in starvation so as to keep up an appearance. After they arrive at maturity they drift away somewhere, but certainly not into farm work, or domestic service. This is not by any means what it should be. In fact it is developing into a great social and economic problem. There are several branches of farm work not suited for women, and they are well out of these. But what objection can there be to milking cows? What objection can there be to washing or baking or cleaning a house? The ends of a woman's existence no doubt go beyond these, but practical work and a little manual labour will do her no harm, mentally or physically."

So many causes combine to bring about such changes that one can hardly venture to attribute them to any one particularly specified; but, apart from the fact that, the present day tendency being one of unrest and desire for amusement and excitement, both men and women are drawn away from the quiet of the country into the feverish bustle of the town, there are, I think, two reasons why women are apparently revolting against a purely domestic life whether in town or country. The first is that it has no limitation of the hours of labour. As the old rhyme has it, "a woman's work is never done." There is no part of the day when she can feel that she is her own mistress. Except when she has her "afternoon out" she feels that her whole time has been bought and paid for; that she must be at the beck and call of her employers morning, noon, and night.

And so, as women are beginning to long and to cry for liberty and freedom just as men are doing, they are willing to sacrifice even the prospect of a comfortable home life, whether in farm or domestic service, to the hardships which, however severe, are still associated with the idea of spare time that can be called their own. Perhaps one good result which may grow out of the changes which have brought so many women and girls into shops and factories may be to teach us eventually that all women workers have a right to some leisure time; that if an eight-hours' day is good for a man it is no less good for his wife or his maid-servant; and so we shall have to remodel and rearrange our domestic life accordingly.

The other reason which, I think, has, consciously or unconsciously, helped to drive women out of domestic service is the fact that what is regarded as peculiarly women's work in the house has too long been looked upon as something menial and degrading. The domestic servant is usually looked down upon as being almost of a lower caste, and the rising generation of young

women, better educated, perhaps, in these days of free education and school boards, than was that of the past, naturally rebels against such a condition of things, choosing rather the illusory dignity of outside work at starvation wages than comparative comfort with a fancied loss of self-respect. I believe the real foundation of this degrading of women's work lies in the unnatural discrimination made in the home training of boys and girls. Boys are allowed to grow up with the idea that they demean themselves by doing any such work as their sisters are constantly called upon to perform; that it is an act of condescension on their part to assist in any kind of house-work whatever, that in such matters their sisters are their servants whose services they are at all times entitled to demand; and in this way all outside paid work becomes glorified as something honourable, while house-work is despised. What wonder if the woman of to-day, who is so largely sharing man's outside labour, should also be now beginning to share his long-headed and often openly expressed contempt for the work which once was entirely her own? The wonder would be if it were otherwise. Our social life is being turned upside down. It will take a good many changes yet before we finally bring order out of our chaos.

LILY BELL.

**LIFE AND DEATH ON THE COALFIELDS.**

By OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

I.

**Micklesfield — In the Wake of a Tragedy—Widows and Orphans—£15,000 Subscribed—What will become of the Money?**

About nine miles to the north-east of Leeds the traveller by the Hull express passes a little station named Micklesfield. The station opens into a village composed of three or four rows of small flat-faced poor-looking houses, built, as usual in Yorkshire, in grey stone, some with gardens at the back and some without. A portion of the land in the neighbourhood is evidently used for allotments; here and there are pig-styes and a familiar smell. A little way to the right rises the black framework of the Peckfield Colliery pit-head. In the middle of the day the place seems deserted, save for a few children here and there in quiet groups.

Micklesfield was an exceedingly common-place and uninteresting village up to the last day of April this year. Then an explosion in the neighbouring pit lifted it up on a pillar of smoke and fire, and called the attention of the public, if not to the poverty of life on the coalfields, at least to the daily dread and peril of death there. Once more it was driven in upon the popular mind that however fortunate the lot of the collier might be in other respects, and however freely he lavishes mutton chops upon his bulldog and champagne upon himself, he spends his working day in constant danger of being poisoned to death at the far end of a dark hole in the ground. That, indeed, is the easiest ending he can look forward to in case of accident, for after-damp is very gentle, painless, and sure in its effects. But what must be the torture of the man who finds himself crushed against the floor by a fall from the roof, pinned to the side of the road by a derailed car, sawn in two by a wire cable, or burst out of human shape by a sudden blast of flame? Even if the collier did live on champagne and fat geese, which is not true, he might fairly claim to have earned them.

It is now over three months since the Micklesfield disaster, and the public has a short memory. It may be well to recall some of the facts, more especially as they illustrate very fairly the conditions under which the colliery population of a large part of Yorkshire live and work. And the place has a further claim on the particular attention of Yorkshire people, because a very large sum of money has yet to be distributed amongst the families of those who lost their lives. I venture to say that if this money was subscribed for the purpose of relieving distress, and not for the purpose of providing the charity commissioners with employment, then this subject becomes one of interest to all parties concerned.

The explosion in the Peckfield pit was attended with all the usual mystery as to its cause. The colliery officials aver that this pit was always regarded hitherto as remarkably safe. On the other hand, I am informed that a disaster was foretold as certain some twelve months ago by experienced colliers, who did not hesitate to bring a charge of

carelessness against the management. I repeat the statements for what they are worth, and without offering any opinion one way or the other. What is certain is that 65 men lost their lives, of whom 41 were married, and 36 leave widows with families of young children. In all, there are 102 children under the age of 16 to be provided for; with their mothers, 138 in all. The families range in number from one child to eight and nine. Most of them are residents of Micklesfield, though some live in the neighbouring villages of Garforth and Kippax. Of these Micklesfield is comparatively quite new, having been built by the colliery company on their own land to accommodate their own workers. The men, no doubt, appreciate the advantage of living within five minutes' walk of their work, especially as Garforth and Kippax are some forty minutes off by road. Rents in the village range from 3s. 3d. to 10s. per week. There has been no abatement of rent so far as I could discover made in the case of any of those families from whom the only breadwinner was so suddenly taken.

I arrived in Micklesfield on a sunny morning in June, and received a comprehensive and rather appalling general direction from the stationmaster. "You want to see some of the widows?" he said. "Well, you'll find them in your street, pretty near every house you come to." For various reasons it may be better not to give the names of those I talked to, nor will space permit me to give their sad stories at any length. The following may be taken as typical cases:

Mrs. A., aged 65, shared a house at 3s. 6d. a week rent with her married daughter and one grandchild. Her husband, like herself, was close upon the three score years and ten, and had been so unwell since Christmas that nearly all his wages had gone for medicines. As both the old man and the young had been working only 2½ to 3 days a week for months past, it may be imagined that this was no light burden. As for herself, Mrs. A. had a son whatever. In a place like Micklesfield every housewife has to do her own work. There was no washing, charring, or anything of that kind to be had, and even if there was she was not strong enough at her age for much of it. She had had two payments of 5s. since her husband was killed from the Sick and Accident Fund at the colliery, to which he had, of course, subscribed, because it was stopped off his wages at the office. When did she get the first 5s? Saturday week. (6th June), and five weeks after the disaster.)

Mrs. B., her daughter, a wistful, hopeless-looking woman, looking older than her years, said she had been married four years and had one child, who was now visibly playing on the floor. For him she received 2s. 6d. a week, commencing on 6th June, as well as 5s. for herself. The united income of this household was, therefore, 12s. 6d. a week, out of which they paid 3s. 6d. rent, and had 9s. left wherewith to feed and clothe three persons. She was told that this fund would last about twelve weeks longer, and how much they would get after that she did not know. She understood there was another fund at the colliery, from which they should receive about 2s. each. No, she did not know when they would receive it, but hoped sometime. She did not wish to complain, but the money would be very useful just now.

Expressing a wish that something more substantial might be done for them, and apologetically, "I won't a little higher up the street," "No, sir, there's been no one lost out of here, thank God," was the reply at the next house I called at; "but you might look in next door and talk to Mrs. C."

Mrs. C. wore the utterly broken-down and slatternly look of one for whom the world had proved too hard. Her face was thin, worn, and sallow, her hair gathered up into an untidy wisp, her clothing far from clean. On the floor sat a chubby little fellow of ten months, his fat face very sore and very dirty. He was the youngest of six, and the eldest was twelve years of age. She had been married for fourteen years, and had lived at Kippax, whence her husband walked three miles to his work up to four months ago. Latterly he had been working only two days a week, but she thought that their average income during their married life would have been about 2½ a week when he was in work. She also had received two payments of 5s. and 2s. 6d. for each child. She did not look more than thirty, but it was evident to see that excessive child-bearing, household drudgery, and bitter poverty had broken her spirit.

Mrs. D. was quite another type, younger, stronger, and smarter looking. But then, she had had only two children. They had, she said, been "doing dreadful bad," and only the Tuesday before the accident she had urged her husband to leave the district altogether. The Saturday before he lost his life all he had to bring home was 2s. 6d., and

their rent alone was 4s. Other weeks his earnings had been 2s. 6d. for the whole week. She was now taking two lodgers, and did not wish to leave, at least until the garden produce had been gathered in.

But, undoubtedly, the saddest case which came under my notice was that of a woman out of whose house the hand of death had suddenly snatched no less than three. Her husband, a lad they had reared, and a lodger, had all gone down the shaft that morning, and she never saw them again, for the babe she had in her arms was born that very day. This was the eighth child living and for a long time her husband had worked only two days a week. Her rent was 3s. 6d. a week, and a strip of allotment cost 5s. yearly.

These families were supplied with coal from the pit-head, about a quarter of a mile away, at the rate of 6s. 4d. ton delivered, or 5s. not delivered. Bottom men are supplied at 5s. delivered. It may be remarked that the price paid the man for getting the same quantity of coal, after deductions for dirt have been made, is 1s. 2d. to 3s. per ton, so that the firm charges a profit of 50 per cent. or more for passing the stuff through their hands.

The main point which I wished to make clear, however, was the very important one of the distribution of relief. As already indicated, it was not at all evident that the funds which ought to have been at the disposal of the bereaved families were administered with a due regard to their pressing needs. There may have been reasons for this which were not evident to me, but it is a fact that the Sick and Accident Insurance Fund, towards which 3s. a week was stopped out of each man's wages, was not drawn upon for five weeks after the disaster occurred. And yet another fund, the Widows and Orphans, to which the men contributed 1d. a week, and which amounted to about £6 for each widow, had not been touched at all on the eighth week. These funds, be it noted, were the men's own property, having been deducted from the weekly wages at the office before they were paid. On inquiry at the cashier's office I was informed that the latter fund could not be distributed until the committee which had charge of it should meet. But on the face of it one is forced to wonder why the committee did not meet weeks before. With these facts in mind, and remembering also that in the case of other colliery accidents, such as that recently at Thorncell Lees (also in Yorkshire), it is impossible to keep free from some misgivings as to the ultimate disposal of the huge relief fund which has been accumulated by public subscription for these destitute families in Micklesfield, A sum of about £15,000 has been collected chiefly by the newspaper, and duly voted on trustees. Is this, like so many other funds of the same sort, to be doled out in such niggardly portions that long before it is exhausted the children who should have benefited by it are grown up, and the widows whose distress it was intended to relieve are either dead or married again? If so, I venture to think that the purpose for which the public gave with such warm-hearted generosity will have been defeated. But that such a danger exists is amply proved by the history of the Victoria disaster fund, the Tondre pit explosion, the Thornhill Lees, and many other relief funds.

There is here, of course, no question of dishonest dealing, but simply of lack of intelligent sympathy, of that deplorable middle-class habit of mind which regards the workers as mental and moral infants, to be carefully preserved from all temptation to extravagance, even if what is virtually their own has to be held back from them. I have more than once heard it put forth as a maxim born of wise experience, that the sooner a working-man's widow is forced to do something for herself the better for her. Hence, the less assistance she receives the better for her, the greater the power of self-reliance, etc., etc., she will develop. Of course a man may act on this principle in the disposal of his own money if he wishes, though in the case of a woman in his own class he probably would not set it out. But in the case of public money subscribed for a specific object such an assumption of the powers of Providence becomes a gross importance and a serious wrong.

In the next article, which will deal with Rothwell, another typical Yorkshire mining village, I hope to show how it is that the collier, no matter what his habits of life may be, and what his age is at death, is inevitably and always compelled to leave his family dependent on the cruel mercies of charity.

The Paris meeting against the unexampled extradition of the six Italian refugees was attended by 2000 citizens. The Labour Leader for 1st and 8th August will be enlarged in order to give a full report of the International Congress proceedings.

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